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## DEATH

By D. T. PRAIGG

Oh, Death! thou long maligned and dreaded foe  
Of that inherent spark which comes unsought,  
But unto which we cling as though it were  
Of priceless worth, I come to thee with meed  
Of praise too long delayed, for thou hast been,  
Of all the friends of man, the truest, best,  
And steadfast most in loyalty and love;  
And hast evinced from him a sympathy  
Which thy detractors, lost in blind conceit,  
And dreading change from fickle light of Day  
To cloudless Night, can ne'er appreciate,  
Nor plaudit give for duty well performed.

Thou dost come to man when others from him  
Turn away, and he becomes an outcast  
On the paths of earth, shunned, reviled, abused  
By all his fellows, and afflicted sore  
By heavy hand which Time upon him lays;  
And thou dost give to him the gentle boon  
Of rare forgetfulness of worldly griefs,  
Op'ning wide to him the regal chamber  
Of honored guest, where blest Oblivion  
Close draws the curtains of her silence oe'r  
The din of conflict in a world of strife,  
And gives to tired life her sweet repose.

Thou art the loyal friend, oft tried, of strength,  
The enemy of weakness, self-approved,  
Yet thou dost come unto the old, infirm,  
And long despairing with reward of rest,  
And lead them far away from earthly paths  
On which they tread with falt'ring step and are  
A burden to themselves and earth and time;  
And for this sad estate dost give to them  
Thy blest eternity of voiceless Calm.  
And taking thus the debris from the paths,  
Which Time doth litter with the wrecks of men,  
Thou givest Youth an unobstructed course  
On missions that unveil the New and make  
The roads of earthly progress bud and bloom  
With fragrance and with beauty unexcelled.

Thine is the heritage of blissful Calm,  
In which the Present reigns supreme, undimmed  
By clouds that lower o'er the buried Past  
And from misgivings of the Future free,  
In an abode where Hope's illusions cease  
To beckon on to dull Despair, and Time,  
Of pow'r despoiled, incites no more to aim  
Whose inspiration is its earthly tomb.  
Thus, then, to pay thee tribute and declare  
The regal worth of thy decree, I come,  
And on thy paths I strew the bloom of earth  
And crown thee Mercy's noblest gift to man.